

STAT

Approved For Release 2005/04/13 : CIA-RDP80B01554R003200190013-7

Approved For Release 2005/04/13 : CIA-RDP80B01554R003200190013-7

EDITORIALS

U.S. Intelligence Community Indicted by Series of Failures

PERHAPS the most disturbing report yet on the U.S. intelligence community is the news that President Carter is not satisfied with the quality of its reporting and analysis.

Mr. Carter was caught off guard by the rioting in Iran. His intelligence reports said the shah had such tight control of his nation's political system that the opposition would be no more than a troublesome irritation.

Apparently the CIA was giving more weight to the shah's secret police than any of its other sources, assuming that the huge CIA station in Teheran has other sources. But the CIA wasn't alone. The huge U.S. embassy staff was unable to get any contrary information back to the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the even larger Defense Attache's Office did not make a convincing report to the Pentagon. Or, worse yet, any other reports were dismissed by the intelligence community staff as the report to Mr. Carter was prepared.

This does not seem to be an isolated instance.

The intelligence community discounted the possibility of war in the Middle East in the fall of 1973. The Yom Kippur War followed.

Military intelligence was unable to foresee the total collapse of the South Vietnamese army in 1975, and the CIA's Saigon station chief had been hornswoggled into thinking a settlement would be negotiated.

The bureaucratic politics involved in the preparation of intelligence estimates went on for so long that the White House was unable to get timely, accurate information on the Soviet Backfire bomber in 1976.

The CIA confessed in 1977 that its economic analysis had been faulty and that the Soviet Union was spending

about twice as much money on defense as CIA analysts had ever predicted.

And the best information available indicates that the State Department failed to keep the President up to date on Fidel Castro's plans to release 3,600 political prisoners.

Only the National Security Agency, which collects information by means of satellites and electronic eavesdropping, seems to have come through these years relatively untainted.

The failures we list here are not aberrant stunts like putting poison in Patrice Lumumba's toothpaste or sneaking itching power into Mr. Castro's skin-diving suit. Nor are they the significant and systematic violations of Constitutional rights that Congress and the White House allowed the intelligence agencies to commit through lack of control.

This is a breakdown in the cardinal function of U.S. intelligence — collecting accurate information and getting it to the President and other decision-makers when they need it.

We can anticipate the argument that we'll get from the CIA: All the leaks, the revelations of dissident ex-CIA agents have closed off sources in allied spy agencies.

Hogwash!

The failures have gone on too long and are too pervasive. The intelligence agencies apparently were more interested in being James Bond swashbucklers than in being successful reporters.

When President John F. Kennedy dedicated the then-new CIA office building in Langley, Va., he told agency employees that history would trumpet their failures and no one will know of their successes. Apparently Mr. Kennedy's statement is being used by the spies to justify all their failures, because the successes are few and far between these days.